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HERO FOLK OF ANCIENT BRITAIN

SARA E. WILTSE

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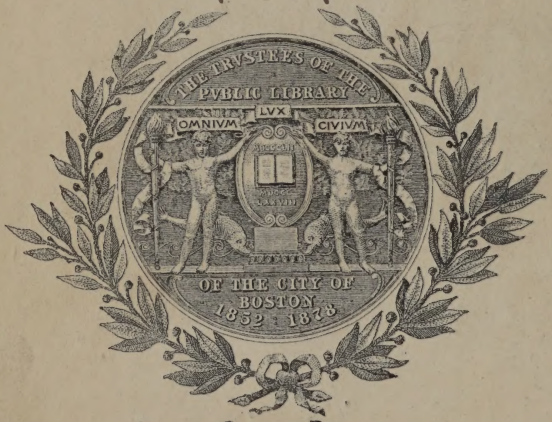

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HERO FOLK OF ANCIENT BRITAIN

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GINN AND COMPANY

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INTRODUCTION

In his admirable work on English literature Mr. William J. Long points out five great principles, one or more of which is reflected in every poem or story possessing the elements of immortal interest. These principles are love of personal freedom, responsiveness to nature, religion, reverence for womanhood, and love of glory.

Applying such a test to the ancient stories presented in this volume, we find one or two of these principles shining from every incident.

It is not known who first told these tales; we only know that Jack the Giant Killer and Tom Thumb are in the goodly company of King Arthur's Knights, and that Jack of Beanstalk fame flourished in the days of England's Darling, Alfred the Great.

The pictures and language are harmonized with the times: arms, dress, and domestic architecture present no anachronisms.

Adhering to the principle of all editorial work heretofore done by me, the emphasis of these stories has been changed by simply laying stress upon the positive virtues of kindness to neighbors and love of king and country.

For obvious reasons the latest addition to Tom Thumb, dating back to the sixteenth century, is entirely omitted, having no more right there than any vulgar tale would have if picked up to-day in bad company.

SARA E. WILTSE

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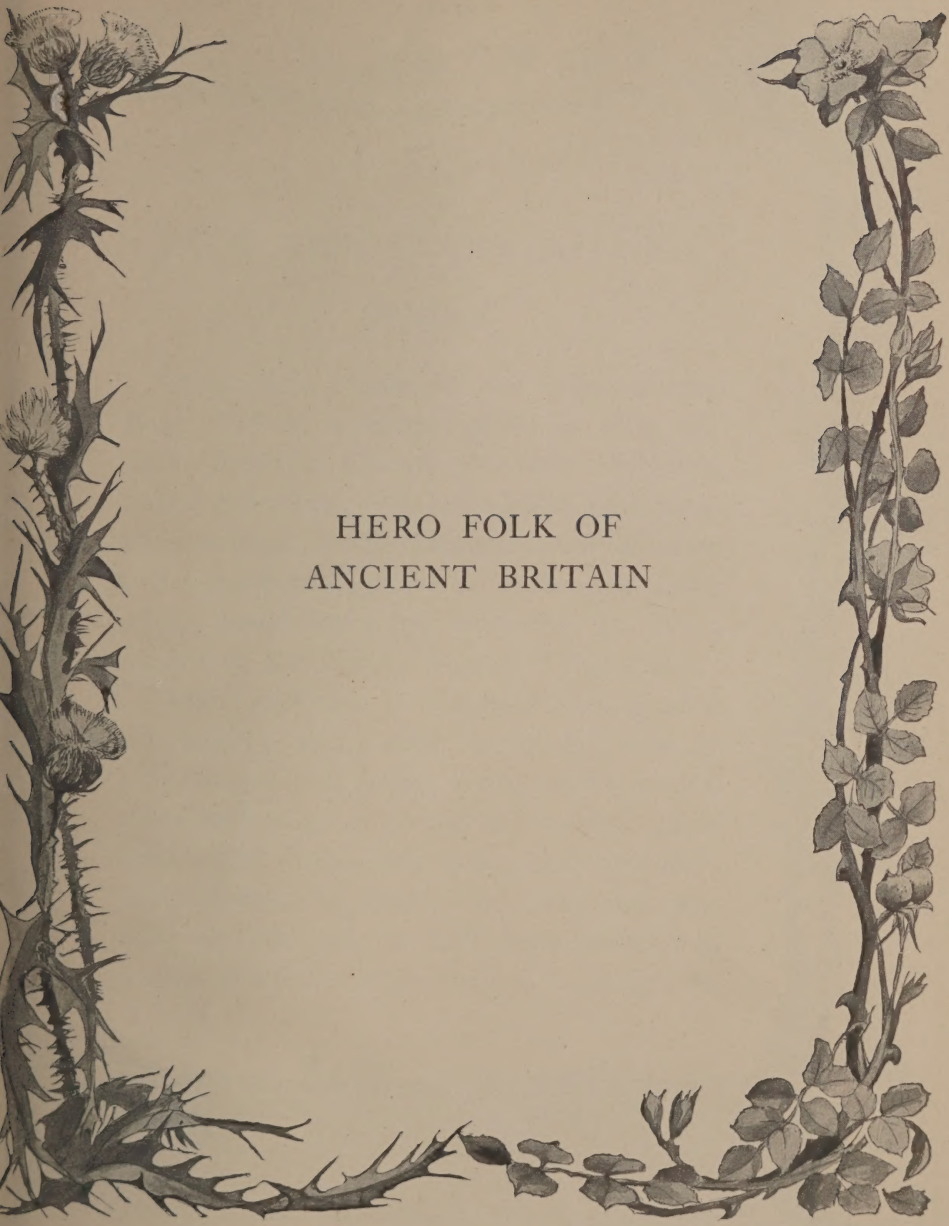


HERO FOLK OF ANCIENT BRITAIN

JACK THE GIANT KILLER

PART I

Once upon a time, in the reign of good King Arthur, a farmer with his only son, Jack, lived in County Cornwall, England, near Lands End. The farmer told Jack many stories about King Arthur's deeds of valor, and every boy longed to do some great thing which would make him worthy to become a knight of the famous Round Table order.

When Jack was in the field looking after his father's sheep and cattle, he used to plan battles and sieges, using sticks for soldiers and piles of stones for castles. Few boys could throw Jack in a wrestling match. When beaten he would think long and carefully on the way it had been done, and would practice the movement by which he

was thrown, until even men were slow to try their strength against his skill.

In those days a huge giant lived in a cavern on the top of Mount Cornwall, which rises out of the sea at some distance from the mainland. This giant was so ferocious that everybody in Cornwall lived in terror of his visits. When he waded across in search of prey, people ran and hid, leaving their sheep and cattle for him to carry off at his pleasure. For many years the coast of Cornwall had been a free hunting ground for this monster, and Jack made up his mind that he would do his neighbors a service by ridding the earth of the Cornwall giant.

First of all, the lad decided to get a look at his intended victim. To accomplish this he had to take the risk of being caught by the giant, who, it was said, liked human flesh better than that of sheep or cattle.

One day Jack saw the people running like leaves before the wind. Cattle huddled in bunches, bellowing with fright. Lambs bleated in helpless terror as the giant strode among them, swinging his bloody club. Jack nimbly climbed a tree, taking care to keep the trunk between himself and the hideous creature. From a branch high in the air Jack had a good look at his enemy, and he saw that the giant could easily take a boy of his size between his thumb and finger and whirl him as a boy tosses a bat in play.

Jack knew now that his wit must oppose the giant's strength, so one very dark night he swam from the mainland to the mountain, making himself familiar with the place. He took a shovel, which he hid near the entrance to the cave. The next night he took a pick-ax across, and spent some time examining the ground. He discovered that the earth

was soft and rather sandy. The third night he went very early, taking a lantern with him, and a hunting horn, which he hid with the shovel and pickax.

Not long after these preparations the giant made another visit to the mainland, helping himself to property which the owners were afraid to defend. After gorging himself in the cave to which he carried the fattest sheep and the finest cattle, the giant slept like a great overfed animal.

Jack went to the mountain early in the evening, and he could hear the giant snore long before reaching the mouth of the cave.

With shovel and pickax Jack set to work as if his life depended upon each stroke. He dug a pit near the entrance to the cave, deep enough to cover the giant if he stumbled into it, which was exactly what Jack intended he

should do. Before daylight Jack had covered the pit with branches, on which he sprinkled a little earth, and just as the sun rose he put the horn to his lips and blew a blast both long and loud. This awoke the giant, who came to the opening and, seeing Jack, roared: "You shall pay dearly for waking me. I 'll boil you for my breakfast."

Running forward to catch the boy, who so boldly faced him, the giant tumbled head-foremost into the pit.

Jack bent over the hole and shouted, "Will you have Jack boiled like an egg for your breakfast now?"

By this time the giant was on his feet, but he was so stunned by the fall that Jack easily ended his life with one sharp blow of the pickax.

The people were most grateful to Jack, and the chief authorities called a meeting at

which he was named Jack the Giant Killer. They also gave him a sword and belt. On the belt, in letters of gold, these words shone like the rising sun:

This is the valiant Cornishman
Who slew the giant Cormoran.

Jack had a right to be proud of this well-earned belt which he wore wherever he went. You may be sure he did not allow the letters of gold to tarnish nor the sword to rust. Many a time he would lay the belt on a rock in front of him and touch the words "valiant Cornishman" with the tip of his finger, saying aloud, "I must always deserve that title."

The first use Jack made of his sword was in bloodless warfare with thistles that choked the good grain. He slashed off their heads, and soon grain began to grow in place of weeds.

PART II

OLD BLUNDERBEARD

There was still another giant, more dreaded by all good people than the one just slain had been. This giant lived in the west of England, and was known far and near by the name of Blunderbeard. He lived upon human flesh and kept an enchanted castle in the midst of a great forest. When he heard that Jack had killed his friend, the giant Cormoran, he vowed to take Jack's life.

The people of Cornwall having settled to their peaceful farming, Jack started on a long journey into Wales. He wore the glittering sword and shining belt given him by his grateful neighbors, and, being of a fearless and venturesome nature, went alone into the deep woods which covered a vast stretch of land between Cornwall and Wales.

Walking in a dense forest is no easy sport. Our hero clambered over many fallen trees, through many thick tangles, and into many dark ravines, before he was weary. But coming to a fountain of clear water bubbling out of a stony bank, he sat down to eat some bread and cheese. Now the fountain was enchanted, and Jack had no sooner tasted its cool water than he fell into a heavy sleep.

Old Blunderbeard, watching from his castle, knew there was a stranger within his domains, and, as soon as Jack was asleep, walked down to the fountain, read the lines on the intruder's belt, and picking the lad up as if he were but a toy soldier, stalked away with him.

The giant's lumbering gait and the crashing of branches as he strode through the thicket awoke Jack, who was somewhat scared to find himself in the clutch of old Blunderbeard. But he made no sign of fear, and was

planning means of escape long before the giant discovered that he was awake.

Old Blunderbeard, however, gave him no chance of getting out of his grasp until he got him inside his horrid castle, and into a room littered with skulls and bones of former victims. Here he set Jack down and spoke for the first time. What he said might well terrify one less valiant than Jack, for it was a blood-curdling speech: "Your heart will make me a tasty mouthful when well seasoned."

Jack's wit was nimble as his body, and he quickly answered, "I brought good sauce from Cormoran's cave, but your own blood will furnish red vinegar for the next feast in this castle.

This so enraged the giant that he threw Jack headlong into a cell and went to fetch another giant to witness Jack's death.

Jack wasted no time in rubbing his bruised elbows, but began at once to hunt for some

means of escape. He tried the door,—of course it was bolted on the outside. While searching the floor for some weapon he heard a mournful voice repeating these words:

"Haste, valiant stranger, haste away,
Lest you become the giant's prey.
On his return he 'll bring another,
Still more savage than his brother;—
A horrid, cruel monster, who
Before he kills will torture you.
Oh! valiant stranger haste away
Or you 'll become the giant's prey."

These terrifying words did not dismay Jack, who only vowed to himself that he would release the unhappy people, whose moans and cries could be heard in all directions. Before the last words of the warning were uttered, however, Jack had found two strong cords which had bound other prisoners in that cell, as perhaps he would have been bound had

not the giant been made so angry by his ready retort. Slipknots were quickly made at the ends of both ropes, which Jack coiled around his hand and then braced himself in a narrow opening in the wall, which served as a window. This opening was directly over the castle gate. There was no time to lose, for two giants were already coming, arm in arm.

"Now," Jack thought, "it is either death or freedom"; and as the giants came through the gate, he flung the ropes over their heads, drew them taut, tossed the ends in his hands over a beam in the cell, threw his whole weight upon the pulley, and choked the giants until they gave up the struggle. He then made the ropes fast to the beam, went down one of them, hand over hand, until within reach of his enemies, when, with one stroke for each, he cut off their heads.

Now he took the castle keys from old

Blunderbeard's pockets, and made a strict search in every room. In the very first one he found three beautiful ladies cruelly tied to the wall by their hair.

When Jack released them and told the good news of freedom for all the prisoners, these ladies showed the way to another room where their husbands were pinioned, having undergone shameful torture at the hands of the giant.

Jack soon learned that all the prisoners were loyal subjects of King Arthur, and that the giant had possessed himself of their treasure as well as their persons.

After a joyous feast in honor of this great victory Jack left the lords and ladies in full possession of the castle, refusing any reward except the report to Arthur and his Knights of what Jack the Valiant Cornishman had done to serve his country and his king.

PART III

THE TWO-HEADED GIANT

Jack, having little money, was forced to travel as fast as his feet could carry him. It was not long before he lost his way in a valley that was overshadowed by two high mountains. After wandering all day without seeming to make any progress, he was well pleased to see a house at last. He went boldly to the door and rapped loudly. There were no lights, and Jack thought the inmates might be sound asleep, for the hour was late. The echo of his loud rapping had not died away, however, before the door was opened by a monstrous two-headed giant, who barred the entrance.

Jack was too well-bred to seem to notice anything unusual in the appearance of a monster with two heads, and greeting him pleasantly, told how he had lost his way and asked for

a night's lodging. The giant covered his malice and cruelty with a great show of friendliness. He invited Jack to come in, and welcomed him to a room set apart for travelers. The room was well furnished, and the giant bade Jack good night, wishing him sound sleep and good rest.

There was something evil in the giant's voice, although his words were kind, and something threatening in his rolling eyes, that made Jack sit up in bed and plan means to escape from the house which he had so gladly entered. He was tired and footsore, yet he could not sleep.

About midnight he heard some one walking in a room next to his own, and, listening sharply, heard the giant muttering:

"Though here you lodge with me this night,
You shall not see the morning light;
My club shall dash your brains out, quite."

"Say you so?" thought Jack. "Is this the way you treat travelers whom you welcome to your guest chamber? I 'll match your trickery with my cunning, or I 'll give my sword and belt back to County Cornwall."

Thereupon he crept softly out of bed, and, feeling his way about the room, found a heavy billet of wood. This he put into the bed where he was supposed to be lying, spread the cover over it, and hid in the darkest corner of the chamber.

Shortly after he had done so the giant came into the room and pommeled the billet of wood with his club, supposing he was breaking every bone in Jack's body.

Early next day Jack went down to bid the giant good morning and thank him for the hospitality he had shown. Our hero had concluded that he would do his country further service by destroying this deceitful creature.

The giant was surprised to see his guest alive; indeed he was already stirring up the coals over which he was preparing to broil Jack's well-pounded flesh for his breakfast.

When Jack bade him a cheerful good morning, he could only stammer: "Pray how did you sleep? I hope nothing you may have heard or seen disturbed your rest."

"Nothing worth speaking about," Jack lightly answered; "I believe a rat did give me two or three whacks with its tail. But it must have whisked up the chimney or into a hole, for I was not quite awakened by it. Perhaps I dreamed it, after all."

The giant was more scared now than Jack had been in the night. But he ordered two great bowls of hasty pudding and politely invited Jack to have breakfast with him. Jack wished to make his host believe that he could eat as much as any giant in the land,

so while the monster was gulping hot pudding with both mouths, Jack slyly opened his tunic and slipped his pudding, bowl and all, into a leathern bag concealed under his garments.

Before the giant could say a word Jack gayly exclaimed: "Now I will show you a fine trick in return for your hospitality. I could cut off my head and put it on again, but I will rip open my stomach instead. I seldom eat big bowls with my pudding, and I feel a slight pain."

Jack then seized a knife, and cutting through his tunic and into the leather bag, spilled the pudding on the floor without breaking the bowl.

The giant, ashamed to be outdone by a little fellow like Jack, cried, "Ods splutter hur nails — hur can do that hurself," and picking up a knife, slashed himself open.

In a moment he fell dead by his own stupid hand.

Jack made all haste to leave the giant's house, very thankful for whole bones in his body and for the unexpected self-destruction of one more enemy of the king.

Our hero had now done his country much service. He had freed his neighbors from fear of the vile Cormoran, he had set free a great number of men and women who had been prisoners in the castle of old Blunderbeard, and had caused the wicked two-headed monster to destroy himself. Surely he had deserved his sword and belt.

Whenever there were no giants at hand, Jack turned his strength to fighting the stones and weeds that spoiled the crops.

PART IV

THE GIANT WITH THREE HEADS

Not long after this adventure Jack met the only son of King Arthur, who was traveling in Wales. The prince was without servants, having left his father's court to rescue a beautiful lady from an enchantment. Great secrecy had to be observed by the prince, for he might be betrayed and thrown under some spell more dreadful than that of the lady whom he wished to serve. He soon learned, however, that Jack could be trusted, and they both were pleased to travel together.

The prince was of a generous disposition, and gave money so freely to every poor peasant whom he met that he was soon reduced to severe straits for food and shelter.

At last a night came when they had not a crust nor a piece of money between them, and

the prince turned to Jack, saying, "How shall we provide for ourselves?"

"Leave that to me, sir," said Jack. "I will provide for my honored prince."

Rain began to fall, but Jack, by bending some saplings together and thatching them with leafy branches, made a well-covered tent for his prince.

"Be of good heart, my prince, and stay here a few hours. I know a three-headed giant who lives not more than two miles from this spot. He can fight five hundred men and make them run before him like sheep."

"Alas, Jack!" replied the prince; "we cannot brave such a monster."

"My lord, leave me to manage him; do you but wait here until I come back," Jack made answer.

So the prince stayed behind, while Jack, taking one of the prince's horses, rode at full

speed to the very gate of the castle, where he knocked loudly, encouraging the horse to make a great clatter with his hoofs.

The giant roared with all three of his voices at once, "Who's there?"

"No one but your poor cousin Jack," was the reply.

"Well, what news, Cousin Jack?"

"Dear uncle, I have heavy news," said Jack.

"Pooh!" answered the giant; "no heavy news can come to me. Am I not the great three-headed giant, who can fight and drive before me five hundred men?"

"Alas! alas!" said Jack. "Here is the king's son coming. He commands two thousand men. Two thousand men can destroy you and your castle, as you must know."

"Oh, cousin Jack!" blubbered the giant, with all three of his mouths at once; "this is heavy news indeed. But I have a secret

underground cave. I will hide in it, and you shall bar me in. When the king's son and his two thousand men are gone you will let me out."

So saying he gave Jack keys to all parts of his castle, glad enough to keep his three heads on his shoulders.

Jack barred the giant into his secret cave, and made all haste back to the prince. They were soon in the castle, where Jack served the prince with the best the giant's larder could supply, giving him a comfortable bed and assuring him that no harm could befall them as long as they kept the giant barred in his underground retreat.

After sleeping soundly and having a good breakfast, Jack restored to the prince as much gold and silver as he had given to the poor in Wales. This Jack assured the prince was quite just, since the people were in the

employ of the giant, who obliged them to beg for his miserly hoard. He then guided the prince full three miles beyond the castle, returning to let the giant out of the hole in which he was cowering.

The giant offered Jack any part of his wealth he might choose, for he was glad to find his castle standing and most of his hoard untouched.

"Good uncle," said Jack, "I ask nothing but the tattered cap and coat, the rusty sword, and ragged shoes which are always kept near your bed."

"You shall have them, but you must keep them for your very own, Jack; they are magic things. The coat will make you invisible, the cap will add to your knowledge, the sword will cut anything, and the shoes, — ah, Jack! the shoes are of untold swiftness. All these may be of use to you in time of danger.

You have the wit to use them; I am always forgetting them when my need is greatest.

"Last night I bethought myself of them after you had barred me into the cave. One needs a single head like yours, Jack, to make even magic serve his purposes."

Jack thanked the giant, promised to use the sword in defense of all wronged people, and rejoined the prince. Together they went to the dwelling of the beautiful lady who was under the power of a wicked magician. She received the prince as became a noble lady, and ordered a feast in his honor. When the feast was ended, the lady wiped her lips with a priceless handkerchief, and said: "You must submit, noble prince, to a custom of this palace. I command you to tell me to-morrow morning on whom I have bestowed this handkerchief. If you fail, your head shall be cut from your shoulders."

She then left the prince, who fell into deep fear lest his attempt to free her from enchantment would end in the loss of his life before the task was half done.

Jack bade the prince take courage, and on no account to leave his room in the morning until counsel had been taken with his faithful servant, Jack the Cornishman. The prince went to rest, but no sleep came to his eyes. Jack put on his cap of knowledge, which told him that the lady was forced by enchantment to meet the wicked magician in the forest every night. He thereupon hurried into his coat of invisibility, slipped his feet into the shoes of swiftness, buckled on the sword of sharpness, and reached the forest before the lady was halfway there.

When the lady came she gave the priceless handkerchief to the magician. Jack's anger boiled over on seeing a helpless lady in the

power of a wretch more cruel than any giant. Without a word he swung the sword of sharpness so that it hissed like a snake, and with one blow the head of the magician was struck from his body. This put an end to the cruel enchantment.

Jack took the lady back to the castle, for when the enchantment was broken she could not tell where she was nor why she was always away from her home at that hour of the night.

She was soon restored to her former condition of honor, and accepted the prince, who asked her hand in marriage. Together the three journeyed to the court of King Arthur, where they were welcomed by the king and queen. The prince, you may be sure, told the king what a valiant man Jack had proved himself, and King Arthur called him Sir Jack, making him a knight of the Round Table.

PART V

THE GIANT THUNDEL

Having been so successful in combat with these terrible giants, Jack resolved to rid Wales of all their tribe. He therefore asked the king to furnish a horse and money enough for such warfare. This the king did, with entire faith in Jack's loyalty and skill in contest with the foes of the people. So Jack bade farewell to the noble Knights of the Round Table and set forth alone on his perilous journey. He took with him his priceless cap of knowledge, his invincible sword of sharpness, his matchless shoes of swiftness, and his wondrous coat of invisibility.

Sometimes he led his tired horse up steep hills and through miry marshes. They climbed pathless mountains and together were lost many times in dark ravines.

One day when in a great forest he suddenly heard wild shrieks and mournful cries that chilled his very blood. Forcing his way between trees and through tangled underwood, he soon caught sight of a powerful giant who was dragging a beautiful woman by the hair of her head, at the same time throttling a noble knight who was unable to defend the lady or to escape from the grip of the giant.

Jack leaped from his horse, tied him to an oak sapling, put on his coat of invisibility, grasped his sword of sharpness, and made a rush upon the giant. The giant was so tall that Jack could reach only to his thighs. This was well for the knight and the lady, making it easy for Jack to strike without hurting either of them.

Taking the sword in both hands, he made a stroke with all his might: off came the giant's legs, and his body fell to the ground

with a crash. Jack set his foot upon the giant's neck and shouted: "Thou barbarous and savage wretch! Behold, I am here to bestow upon thee a just punishment for all thy crimes;" and throwing off his coat of invisibility that the giant might see his conqueror, Jack instantly plunged his sword through the huge body.

The noble knight and his virtuous lady were glad indeed to see their fierce oppressor so quickly vanquished. They invited Jack to their house, which was close at hand. But Jack answered, "I cannot rest until I find the den in which this tyrant lived." Sorrowfully the knight replied: "Valiant stranger, the peril is too great. This fearful ogre lived in a den in yonder mountain, with his brother, more ferocious than himself. He will surely kill any one who goes near their horrid abode. Let me persuade you to go home with us."

"Nay," said Jack; "if there be more of this brood of vipers, I would shed the last drop of my blood to rid the kingdom of them. When my task is done I will pay you a visit."

Jack bestrode his horse once more, and set his face toward the mountain where the foe was watching for prey. He soon came in sight of the mouth of a dark cavern, near which a giant sat with a knotted iron club by his side.

The grim monster rolled his bloodshot eyes in all directions. His face was mottled, and a thick wiry beard bristled all over it. His coarse hair hung to his waist and writhed like snakes whenever he turned his head.

Jack hid his horse in a thicket, put on his wondrous coat of invisibility, his matchless shoes of swiftness, his priceless cap of knowledge, and taking his invincible sword of sharpness, he went to the giant's side and spoke these words: "O wretched and vile

monster, I shall soon take you by the beard and slash your head from your shoulders."

The giant could see no one because of the coat Jack wore, but he grasped his knotted iron club and struck madly in front. Jack dodged to one side, dealt a heavy blow with his sword of sharpness, and the giant rolled over, dead as his brother.

There was no one to oppose Jack's entrance to the cave. In it he found a boiling caldron and a large table littered with the bones of captives. Through a barred window he saw a crowd of chained men, who wrung their hands and cried with loud voices, "Alas! alas! young man, flee from this den or your fate will be like ours."

Jack unbarred the window and walked among them, breaking their chains while asking how they came there. An old man made answer, "We are loyal subjects of

good King Arthur, but these bloody giants have caught us, one by one, and one by one they kill and eat us."

The old man was so dazed by his long imprisonment that he could not at first understand that he was free, and again he took up the cry: "Alas! alas! young man, flee from this horrid den, or you will soon be as we are. Even now I hear the kettle boiling for the next victim."

Jack led the poor man out into the clear, fresh air, and gave him food. When the man caught sight of his sons with their hands freed from shackles, he knew they were indeed set at liberty. A great feast was prepared at the house of the neighboring knight, to which all the nobles in that part of the country were invited.

When the company was assembled, the knight who had been rescued so lately told the story of Jack's great deeds. The beautiful

lady, who was the knight's wife, presented Jack with a gold chain having many large links, upon which these words were engraved:

Behold in dire distress were we,
Under a giant's fierce command;
But gained our lives and liberty
From valiant Jack's victorious hand.

Among the guests were five aged gentlemen whose sons our hero had freed from a dungeon in the heart of the cave. They pressed around Jack, trying to thank him for the rescue of their children. Every one was joyous, and peals of laughter gave place to the cries and groans which had so lately filled the air.

Suddenly a herald, pale and breathless, rushed into the hall, telling them to hide or run for their lives, for the giant Thundel had heard of the death of his kinsman, and was on his way to wreak vengeance upon Jack.

People were fleeing like chaff before a gale; children were running around and around like leaves in a whirlwind; already the voice of the infuriated two-headed giant Thundel rumbled in the distance.

Jack put on his priceless cap of knowledge while the herald spoke, and when he had delivered the whole message the young giant killer addressed the company, which obeyed his orders as if he had been the king himself. All the ladies and gentlemen were sent into the garden, being assured by Jack that he would vanquish this giant as he had vanquished the others.

Now the knight's house stood in the middle of the grounds, surrounded by a moat which could be crossed only by a drawbridge. Jack set men to work cutting the drawbridge at both ends, working toward the middle, which was to be left untouched.

The work was barely done when Thundel appeared in the distance. The workmen hid, although they knew that this time it was only Jack who was in danger; but their hearts stood still when they suddenly lost sight of their leader, for you must know that Jack had hurriedly put on his wondrous coat of invisibility, and was already across the bridge to meet the giant. Suddenly the giant stopped, turned his two heads in all directions, sniffed the air as a dog scents game, and muttered:

"Fe, fi, fo, fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman;
Be he alive or be he dead,
I 'll grind his bones to make my bread."

"Say you so?" replied Jack. "You are a monstrous miller indeed."

The giant, more enraged than ever because he could not see with whom he spoke, ground his teeth, plunged forward whither Jack's

voice sounded, swinging his club and shouting: "Art thou that villain that killed my kinsman? An' I get my clutches on ye, I 'll tear thy flesh into shreds and grind thy bones to powder."

"Say you so?" taunted Jack from another point of vantage. "Methinks I hear the millstones now." And running all around the giant, he laughed and drawled:

"Thundel the miller looks for a grist,
A grist, a grist;
And he grinds his teeth and shakes his fist,
His fist, his fist.
But no more feasting on Englishmen,
For, Thundel, you 've met the Cornishman."

With this last taunt Jack flung aside his wondrous coat of invisibility and sped toward the bridge, the giant following headlong.

To the anxious watchers in the garden it looked as if Jack would surely lose his life.

But the matchless shoes of swiftness enabled him to evade the giant at the very moment when he seemed within his grasp. At the middle of the bridge Jack paused for the giant to come close. The giant made a rush, the bridge shook to its foundation; Jack sped lightly across, but the weight of his pursuer forced the wooden beams apart, and Thundel plunged into the dirty water of the moat, the falling timbers nearly severing both heads from his body.

A yoke of oxen drew the giant out of the moat, and, according to Jack's custom, the heads were sent to court, with an account of the manner in which Jack had slain another enemy of the good King Arthur.

PART VI

THE GIANT GALLIGANTUS

After this adventure Jack spent some time at the knight's house before he went in search of other foes. Indeed, he often heard from travelers that there was but one more giant in all the country.

After a season of rest he set forth in search of the last of these terrible monsters. Upon going a long distance he came to a lonely house at the foot of a mountain. Knocking at the door, it was opened by an ancient man whose beard was white as snow. Jack asked for lodging and for any reports about giants living in those parts. The old man invited him to spend the night there, and at supper he spoke in this wise: "Son, I am sensible you are a conqueror of giants. There is one on the top of this very mountain. He lives in

an enchanted castle, and his name is Galligantus. By the aid of a conjurer he gets many knights and ladies into his domain, where he changes them into all sorts of wild beasts. I especially lament a duke's daughter, whom they took from her father's garden into a chariot drawn by fiery dragons. She was changed into the form of a hind, and although many knights have lost their lives in the effort to release her, no one has succeeded. We hear that those who get past the griffins at the gate are themselves transformed into wild animals.

"You, my son, have a wondrous coat of invisibility, which would enable you to pass these griffins who guard the castle, and perhaps you would also escape the enchantment. Could you do so, you would find engraved on an inner gate of the castle the means whereby the enchantment may be broken."

Jack pledged his faith to the old man, and early in the morning set forth on his mightiest adventure.

When he reached the mountain top he passed the fiery griffins in safety because of his wondrous coat of invisibility. No sooner had he gone through the gates than a beautiful hind trotted to his side and laid her pretty head against his arm. Jack was rather startled by this, for it proved that his wondrous coat of invisibility had no magic for one creature at least. He thought of the tales he had heard of knights having become enchanted and transformed, although they had escaped the griffins.

But the valiant Cornishman would not admit to himself that he felt any fear, and when he looked in the great soft eyes of the beautiful hind, something told him to keep her close by his side, whatever should happen.

So he gently laid his hand on her smooth neck and went in search of the gate of which the ancient man had told him. He soon found it, and saw hanging upon it a golden trumpet. The beautiful hind drew very close to him while he read the lines that shone out beside the glittering horn:

> Whoever doth this trumpet blow
> Shall soon the giant overthrow,
> And break the black enchantment straight,
> So all shall be in happy state.

Jack put the trumpet to his lips and gave a blast that made the hills answer with glad echoes. The beautiful hind was instantly transformed into a lovely maiden, who clung trembling to Jack's arm, while lords and ladies came trooping out of the castle, changing from birds and beasts into their own proper shapes, as they crowded around their deliverer. The castle rocked and tottered to its

Griselda M. MacClure

foundations; the giant, the conjurer, and the enchanter were caught in its falling stones; the earth yawned asunder and swallowed castle and giant into its deepest depths.

Jack stood stock-still, dumb with amaze at what he had wrought. All breathless he thought of his king, and of the country now freed from conjurers, enchanters, and giants. In a flash of memory he saw the pasture where as a boy he had built play-castles. His heart leaped to think of the welcome awaiting him there where he had slain the giant Cormoran. All this time the beautiful maiden stood in silence beside him. Suddenly Jack turned to her, glad in his heart of hearts that she of all the crowd was the only one who could see him at this proud moment.

He did not remove his wondrous coat of invisibility until he reached the court of King Arthur. But the lovely maiden saw

him as she had seen him before the enchantment was broken, and she went with him to the king, who received them with great joy. The duke was summoned, for you must have known all along that the hind was his daughter; but it is, perhaps, needful to tell you that the ancient man at the foot of the mountain was himself the duke.

He was overcome with joy and gave his daughter in marriage to Jack the Valiant Cornishman. When the duke went back to his lonely house at the foot of the mountain he found it changed into a castle quite as fine as the king's own.

The king gave Jack gold and houses and land in grateful recognition of his services to the country in destroying all the giants from Lands End to Cheviot Hills.

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

A woman and her little son Jack once lived in Wessex. It was in the time of Alfred the Great, who is still known as England's Darling.

When Jack was a baby his father was carried off to sea by Danish pirates. Every battle between the bloody Danes and the fiery Saxons left Jack's mother in greater need than before.

When Jack began to talk he asked many questions about a battle-ax which always stood in one place near the door of his mother's hut. He soon learned that every lisp about the big battle-ax made his mother cry, so he looked at it in silence, and wondered all the more.

One day when Jack was about twelve

years old, a tall man, with a bow and arrows slung over his shoulder, stopped at the widow's door to ask for a cup of milk. The widow had neither crust of bread nor cup of milk to give the stranger, but she asked him to sit down and rest. As the tired man sat, his eyes fell upon the great battle-ax. He knew without asking that a battle-ax standing idle meant one fighter the less for England, and his heart was heavy at thought of the needs of a mother who had no bread for herself or her child.

At this moment Jack came into the room with a pitcher of water. He went straight to the man, and kneeling, offered him a drink; for one look from man to boy had made Jack know that he was in the presence of his king, Alfred the Great.

Do not ask how the boy knew. No one can explain half of the wonderful things to

be told in this story. Alfred the Great also knew that Jack would soon be a hero, though neither king nor boy spoke a word of these things. The king took a little hatchet from the folds of his cloak and put it into Jack's hand. The hatchet was a strong one, having a double blade like the battle-ax. The handle was of oak, painted blood-red.

Jack's mother would have taken the hatchet from the boy for fear of his hurting himself with such a sharp and shining plaything, but one kingly glance from the blue eyes of her visitor made her know also that Alfred the Great, her hunted king, stood before her. She well knew her country's needs, and she was a loyal subject of the king of the West Saxons; so she took the battle-ax with which her long-lost husband had fought, and helped the king conceal it under his ragged cloak.

The king then went his way,—history tells

you to what lonely spot. Legend and fairy tale now go on with the story of Jack and his little red hatchet.

The next day Jack took his hatchet and went to hunt for roots, berries, or anything he could find for his mother to eat. A man whom he met asked to buy the hatchet with handle of oak painted blood-red, but Jack would take neither gold nor silver for the king's gift, nor was he such a dolt as to boast that the king had been in his mother's house.

The man called him a silly loon, but Jack went happily onward. As he walked away from the man he saw a little thing shining in his path. In the sunlight it glowed pale green, rose and flame color, like an opal, but when Jack picked it up and shaded it in the palm of his hand, it was only a white bean, all speckled with pink. Jack tucked it in his belt and went forward.

He had not gone far when he met another man who said he would give Jack a fish for the hatchet with handle of oak painted blood-red. Good as the food smelled to the hungry boy, something within him told him to turn his back upon this temptation also. He therefore answered the man, saying, "I will not sell my hatchet."

At that moment he saw two glittering little things right by his toes. These he picked up, and they shone in the palm of his hand like opals; but when the man commanded him to show what he had found, and Jack held out his open hand, there was nothing in it but two white beans, all speckled with pink. The man thought them worthless, but Jack tucked them in his belt with the one already hidden there, and started home to show them to his mother.

On the way he met an old woman with a

heavy bundle on her back. The woman saw the hatchet as soon as she saw the boy, and she asked Jack to sell it to her. Jack answered as before, "I will not sell my hatchet."

The woman showed him gold pieces, bread, and even a tunic with a red leather belt, all of which she would give him for the hatchet with its keen blade and handle of oak painted blood-red. But Jack said again, "I will not sell my hatchet."

Now the woman was glad in her heart that Jack would not sell the hatchet, for you must know, as Jack did not, that the old woman was a fairy. She took from a long pocket a handful of white beans all speckled with pink, and gave them to Jack, who thanked her and started to run home, but the fairy called, "Stop!"

Jack stopped, half afraid she might, after all, claim his hatchet, but she only looked kindly

at him, and said: "Tell your mother each bean I gave you will make a whole kettle of soup. And, Jack; be sure you plant the beans that are in your belt, first sprinkling them with water from the river Itchin. Use the pitcher from which the king drank."

Jack knew now that the woman was a fairy, so he made her a very low bow, but when he looked up there was nobody in sight. He was not long in going home to tell his mother that a fairy had talked with him. His mother made a rich soup from one of the beans from the fairy's pocket, and when the sun was setting, Jack sprinkled the three beans as he had been told and put them in the ground beside the door.

Next morning he looked at the beans as soon as he was up, but they had grown so high he could not see the top leaves until he went outside of the house. In one night

the three beans had grown up to the very top of the door.

On the second morning Jack found the beanstalks had grown crisscross, making a stout ladder up to the wind door under the eaves. The third morning at sunrise, when Jack went out to look at his beans, he had to climb the beanstalk ladder to find the very top leaves, which were above the ridge pole of the house. When he came down his mother had another breakfast made from one of the fairy's magic beans. After eating, Jack said, "I wish I could give the king a pitcher of this wonderful soup."

But his mother said, "Alas! no man in Essex, Sussex, or Wessex knows where to find our king."

Jack answered, "I can find and serve him."

So Jack took the little hatchet with handle of oak painted blood-red, and shouted,

" Hitchety hatchety, my little red hatchet,
Hitch at my breeches and up I go."

And with the words he was at the very top of the house. Here he found the beanstalk ladder twisted into a solid trunk not easy to climb, but he dug his toes into the bark and hugged the rough trunk with his knees, climbing slowly until he could just see the lowest branches.

It was sunset now, and Jack made haste to go down and tell his mother what he had seen.

The next morning at sunrise Jack bade his mother good-by, saying he did not know when he would come home. Taking his hatchet, he sprang into the thicket of leaves, saying,

" Hitchety hatchety, my little red hatchet,
Hitch at my breeches and up I go."

He could climb faster than at first, for he

found that his toes had made very good stepping places in the trunk. When he reached the lowest branches he sat down upon one and looked abroad. There was the dear river Itchin, and farther away the queer river Test. There were the gnarled oak trees; there were the smooth beech trees, and far away a little island of solid earth among the bogs. From that island flashed a glint of battle-axes.

Jack sprang to his feet, looked up at the still growing beanstalk, and again climbed, singing,

"Hitchety hatchety, my little red hatchet,
Hitch at my breeches and up I go."

It was hard climbing now. Many times Jack had to hew off thick branches to make a foothold. When he felt a bit dizzy, a flash from one battle-ax far away on the island among the bogs would set his feet steady,

bring his hand to his hatchet, and his thoughts to his task, which he now felt would be long as well as hard.

At about noontime the branches suddenly opened, the beanstalk slid from under his feet, the world below was suddenly lost to his sight, and Jack stood in a strange land. He was not the boy to sit down and cry with fright, however, nor to run about like an ant. He looked for some landmark by which he might come back to the same spot, but there was nothing in sight except desert around and clear blue sky above.

So he grasped the hatchet, glad it had not gone with the beanstalk, and went bravely forward, whistling,

"Hitchety hatchety, my little red hatchet,
Hitch at my breeches and on I go."

Something happened then. Out of the air, or up from the sand, or down from the clouds,

—nobody knows which,—there came a young woman carrying a wand of snowy whiteness. On the wand a little peacock of pure gold was perched. The woman smiled at Jack in a friendly way and asked, "From whence do you come, Master Jack, with your little red hatchet?"

"I climbed the beanstalk," answered Jack.

"You do not answer me," said the woman, frowning now. "I asked not how, but whence, you came."

Jack was frightened by the stern voice and keen look of the woman, but he boldly answered, "I came from Wessex."

At this truthful reply the woman smiled again, the wand glistened, the peacock shook his feathers of gold, and Jack knew that it was another fairy in his path.

"Did your father say you might climb the beanstalk?" asked the fairy.

"I climbed the beanstalk to find my father and to serve my king," Jack made answer. "Can you tell me about my father? My mother cries every time I ask where he is. She will not speak to me of him."

The fairy was charmed to have Jack tell her so freely why he had climbed the beanstalk. To be sure, she knew before he told her, and she knew many other things about Jack, some of which neither you nor I know.

"I will tell you, and I will help you in this strange country. But you must first promise to do exactly as I bid."

Jack gripped his little red hatchet and made the promise. Then the fairy told him this story.

"Your father was a rich man who was kind to the poor and faithful to his king. One day a giant, at the head of a band of pirates, came and took your father prisoner.

The giant would have killed you, but to save your life your parents gave the giant all the gold and silver which was hidden in the house. The next day the giant came to make another search of the place, to see if your mother had kept back any treasure. He found a single jewel which your mother had hoped to keep. This he took from her, and frightened her into making a promise that she would never tell you anything about your father or your king.

"Now listen to every word I say. You are in that giant's country. If he catches you, he will kill and eat you at one mouthful. You are the only one in all the world who can rid the earth of this evil giant and put a stop to his wicked deeds. You must take many risks. Keep your wits about you. Do not talk of what you are going to do; tell no one of your plans. The road to the

giant's castle is before you. All he has belongs to your father and to the king. Your father is in prison, not far from where you stand. Obey me. Go!"

At these words the fairy was gone, whether through the air, or down into the sand, or away behind the clouds, Jack could not see. She slipped from sight as the beanstalk had slipped from under his feet.

Jack did not stand idly looking for her. There was a giant to be fought, and his father to be set free. He must neither sing nor whistle now. He put the hatchet under his tunic and walked forward. It was midday and Jack had tasted neither food nor drink since sunrise. He walked on until the sun set.

It was nearly dark before he saw anything but the sandy road lying before him, and the now cloudless sky arched above him. Once he looked back. No road nor footprint marked

the way he had passed, although the road stretched miles and miles ahead of him. Jack was weary, footsore, hungry, and burning with thirst. He thought that now even the door of the giant's castle would be a welcome sight.

No sooner had he said this to himself than the dim outline of a castle loomed in the distance. Behind it the clouds hung dark and copper-colored, but as Jack walked faster and faster the clouds grew redder and redder, until suddenly the whole gloomy building stood out before him, like a solid rock in billows of blood.

Jack hurried to the only door in sight. A woman came out to meet him, and before he could speak she said: "Run! Run for your life! My husband is a bloodthirsty giant and he will eat you. Run!"

Tired and hungry as he was, Jack had no

mind to run away, now that he was at the very door of the giant he had come to fight. The woman had never before seen any one who did not run when she spoke of her giant husband. But then she had never before seen an English boy. She was glad to find some one who did not show fear, and her heart warmed toward Jack, whom she bade follow her and do whatever she said.

They went through many large rooms, all hung with skins of beasts, boar's heads, and men's skulls. There were piles of glistering bones that rattled and clattered when the woman stepped on loose boards. It was a fearsome place. They passed through a narrow hall with stone bars on either side, and in the dim light Jack saw the face of one prisoner behind those bars, — one among many, — but he knew it was the face of his father. The woman stopped a moment to

clear their path, and Jack opened his tunic so that the prisoners saw the gleam of the hatchet, and their groans were hushed for an instant. The woman was frightened by the sudden stillness, and she looked sharply at Jack, but he was watching her, and neither of them spoke until they reached the kitchen.

The smell of food brought back the boy's pluck. Truth to tell, the sights and sounds of that gruesome place had made him sick. The woman gave him bread, and meat hot from the oven. While he was eating there came a loud knocking and pounding in the hall of the stone bars. From that hall came cries and groans as the giant thrust a heavy crowbar between the gratings, striking every one who could not crowd back out of his reach. The giant's wife hustled Jack into one of the cold ovens, and shut the door just as the giant came stamping in.

Jack heard him roar: "I smell fresh meat! Fetch me fresh meat!"

The giant's wife answered, all in a tremble of fright: "Yes, yes; I smell fresh meat, too. Here it is. I heard you coming."

The giant sat down where Jack could just see him through a crack in the oven door. It was well for the boy that he had eaten a good supper, for the sight of the uncouth wretch at his foul feast made Jack feel weak and sick. The grisly hulk swilled wine and swallowed whole chunks of meat without choking. He ate the best part of a bony goose, feathers and all. At last a half-starved man was found at the bottom of the pile of food. The poor fellow was too nearly dead to know what was being done with him. The giant gloated over this human flesh, cracked some of the bones in his teeth, and licked his bloody lips like a hungry tiger.

Poor Jack was in a hurry to put an end to such frightful doings, but he knew he could not fight the giant hand to hand. As he was thinking of this, the giant yelled to his wife, who came at once.

"Fetch me my little hen," he growled.

The woman brought in a little red hen, setting her on the table. The hen squatted on the table, her very beak standing open in stupid fear of the giant, who roared, "Lay! lay!"

Every time he spoke she laid an egg of pure gold. At last the giant fell asleep, fumbling the eggs with his stumpy fingers. When he began to snore so loud that the eggs rolled around on the table, the hen flew down and cowered by the oven door. Jack came out of the oven, put the frightened hen in his bosom, and, running from the house, leaped into the top of the beanstalk as soon as the castle door swung shut.

Now you need not be surprised that Jack found the beanstalk at the door, for you must remember that this was in a magic country, and that the beanstalk had grown from magic beans. How gladly he sped down its branches to the bare trunk, then down to the ladder, and into his mother's house!

He found his mother crying bitterly, for she thought her boy was lost. Her crying turned to laughter when she caught sight of the lad, and a merry hour they spent, when Jack took the little hen from his bosom and fed her. She rubbed her beak against Jack's face, and laid golden eggs without being bidden.

Next morning Jack left the pretty hen with his mother, and again climbed the beanstalk, singing,

"Hitchety hatchety, my little red hatchet,
Hitch at my breeches and up I go."

This time when he reached the lowest branches of the beanstalk he ran out on one, and looking off toward the island among the bogs, he saw the gleaming of many battle-axes. His heart leaped again with the hope of setting his father free to fight for his country and the good King Alfred.

But Jack was fast learning to do things without wasting time in cobweb plans, so on he went to the top of the beanstalk, where he found the giant's castle within a stone's throw. Jack feared the woman would give him up to the giant if she knew him at once, for doubtless she had been punished for the loss of the hen. Looking about for some disguise, he saw a tuft of tender oak leaves, red and velvety. He rubbed his face with them until he was as red as a little Indian. He put one arm inside of his tunic, so he looked as if he were a cripple. He tied his

fair hair in a bunch with strips of willow bark, and tucked it inside his bonnet, and went limping to the castle door.

The giant's wife was there, and Jack was again told to run for his life; but, just as before, he begged for food. The woman said she dared not give anything to anybody, much less admit a stranger, because her husband was in a storm of anger on account of losing his red hen. She then told Jack how she had befriended a boy and lost the hen, for which offense her husband would surely kill her if he caught her talking with a stranger.

Jack told her not to fear the giant, for he had come back to save her; and uncovering his head, he took off the bands, letting his fair hair fall free, and she knew him to be a friend. Now the giant's wife was the most unhappy of all his prisoners. She was glad indeed to hear even a young lad speak so

boldly in her defense. Once more she led the way to the kitchen, and brought out some of the best food in the house.

Jack had not tasted a mouthful when the walls began to shake and the floors to creak under the tread of the furious giant. The woman thrust Jack into a cupboard and shut the door with a bang just as the giant staggered into the room. Again Jack heard that thundering voice: "I smell fresh meat. Fetch me fresh meat."

The woman made haste to fetch freshly killed pigs, calves, and sheep to the table. The giant had been drinking so much wine that he had eaten only the broken parts of the raw meat, when he fell asleep. There he sprawled on the table, his matted hair tumbling into the mess of bristles and blood, his thick lips smeared with grease, his foul face swollen and uncouth. It was such a loathsome

sight that Jack, unable to endure it, turned his head to one side, hitting a dish which clattered down with a noise that awoke the giant at once. Thinking his wife had broken a plate, he tried to get up to beat her, but was too heavy with wine, so he threw a boar's head at her, swearing he would kill her before morning.

At this threat the woman ran from the room, but the giant yelled: "Fetch me my moneybags! Fetch me my moneybags!"

The moneybags were dragged into the room. The sight of glittering gold pieces roused the giant so that he spent half of the night gloating over his hoard. First a bag of silver pieces was emptied on the table. These the giant fingered and put back. Then he put his hands into a bag of gold and jingled the coins, letting them slip slowly through his greasy fingers. At last he took a small

bag out of one of the large ones and emptied the shining coins into a wooden trencher, and fell asleep while looking at them.

Now was Jack's chance to escape with some of the money which belonged to his father and other victims of the monster's rapacity. The giant snored like a wild beast. Jack crept from the cupboard, but a little dog ran from under the table, barking like a fox. Jack had the presence of mind to throw a piece of meat on the floor. The dog, like all of the giant's household, was half starved, and he ran off with the meat, making no more noise.

The giant was so sound asleep that Jack had no trouble in getting one of the smaller bags of gold, with which he fled to the beanstalk, and was soon once more at home. This time Jack found his mother very ill with a fever, but when she saw her boy

unhurt she got up from her bed and cooked a good breakfast for him. Jack showed her the gold, and told her how he had secured it. He also promised to tell her very soon the whole story of his beanstalk journeys. She trusted to his honor, and did not vex him with questions.

The third morning Jack again sang,

"Hitchety hatchety, my little red hatchet,
Hitch at my breeches and up I go."

He found the climbing of the beanstalk easier than ever before. At the door of the castle he was again met by the giant's wife, who let him in this time without any ado. She was lame and sore from the cruel beating the giant had given her when he awoke and missed one of the moneybags. She led Jack to the kitchen, but before they could say a word the giant came pounding into the hall. Jack jumped headforemost into a big copper

Griselda Miniature

kettle. The woman dropped the lid over him just in time to face her husband and hear the well-known howl: "I smell fresh meat. Fetch me some fresh meat."

The giant ate just as he had eaten before, and when his maw was crammed with food he yelled to his wife, "Bring me my harp!"

Jack threw off the lid of the kettle and saw a little harp made of ivory and gold, with strings of silver. The harp began playing the sweetest music ever heard, but not a finger was touching the silver chords.

The giant fell asleep, as he always did after eating, and Jack crept out of the kettle. He took the harp, which kept on playing, and told the giant's wife to go before him out of the house. She went without a word, walking on tiptoe. The beanstalk lifted its top branches just outside of the door. The woman took a step down, and Jack was

about to follow her when the giant came out, howling with rage because of his lost harp.

Jack bade the woman make haste to the lowest branch, and wait there for him. Then he faced the giant and backed down the beanstalk, the harp slung over his shoulder. The giant was still sleepy and uncertain of his footing. Jack stepped nimbly from one branch to the other, daring the giant to follow him.

The monster was clumsy, and so enraged that he stumbled among the branches; but for all that, he was several times dangerously near the lad. Now Jack's wits had been working as nimbly as his feet, and when he came to a very long branch he ran out to its tip. The giant followed, roaring and snarling.

Jack stood on the end of the branch until the giant was almost upon him; then he dropped to the branch below and scrambled

back to the body of the beanstalk. Before the giant could turn around to crawl back Jack chopped the branch from the trunk with his little red hatchet, and down went the giant, clinging to the branch.

Jack waited to see what would happen. The giant fell with a great thud into the Wessex bogs. The bogs opened under the weight of the hideous creature, the ooze sucked him down, down, down,—and nobody has seen him since.

Knowing that the giant was forever out of the way, Jack went down the beanstalk to find the creature's wife. She, too, had seen the fall of the tyrant, and was quite ready to return to the castle with Jack, her deliverer. They made haste to break bars and undo bolts, setting free scores of men and women who had given up all hope of escape.

Jack's father knew his own son, even as

Griselda M. Mc Gluve

Jack had known the great king, and together they planned a wonderful deed. The giant's wife not only led them to all the hidden and ill-gotten wealth in the castle, but urged the prisoners to help Jack in taking it away.

When the men were all set free and had been given a feast, they followed Jack and his father to the lonely island among the bogs, and placed themselves at the service of good King Alfred.

Meanwhile the giant's wife went to Jack's mother and helped her to prepare a great festival in honor of England's Darling. The little red hen set about laying golden eggs until there was an egg of the precious metal for every man who followed the king.

The gold in the moneybags was freely spent for the feast to be spread when the king and his brave followers should arrive. For days Jack's mother and the giant's wife

were the proudest and busiest women between Lands End and Cheviot Hills.

And when Jack came at the head of the troop, his harp playing martial music, he was the happiest lad in Wessex. Jack's father, with his own battle-ax once more in his hands, was the happiest man in Essex or Sussex, while good King Alfred, with all these loyal men to do his bidding, was without doubt the happiest monarch in all the world.

"What became of the beanstalk?"

I can only say in reply that I believe it is still growing in its own dear Fairyland.

TOM THUMB

PART I

Several hundred years ago a little storybook was sold in the streets of London for a penny. The story was told in rhyme, just as it had grown. Some time in 1600 Richard Johnson, a learned man, turned the verses into prose, saying of them:

The ancient tales of Tom Thumb in the olde time have beene the only revivers of drowzy age at midnight; old and young have with the tales chimed mattins till the cock's crow in the morning; batchellors and maidens with his tales have compassed the Christmas fire blocks till the curfew bell rings candles out. The shepherd and the young plowboy, after their days labor, have caroled out a tale of Tom Thumb to make them merry with; and who but little Tom hath made long nights seem short, and heavy toyles easy?

Using such spelling as the children learn to-day, and taking the prose or the verse, as best suits our times, we "tell it again."

Once upon a time an old couple, having no child, made pets of the animals on their farm.

At last the man paid a visit to a great enchanter named Merlin, to beg that he would send a child to him and his wife. The enchanter seemed to doubt his power, but the plowman begged so piteously, and promised such love and care of the child, that Merlin told him to wait outside the cave for an answer. The man knelt upon a tussock of moss and prayed, while Merlin went into his magic cave to work a charm.

In an hour Merlin came out, wrapped in a cloudlike cloak, and asked the plowman if he was still of the same mind about a child. The plowman said, "Do, I pray, give us a child — even if he shall be no bigger than my thumb." Then Merlin knew the hearts of the old people were set upon having a child in their home, and he waved his wand. The plowman saw a rosy, shining mist all about, and heard a low but very sweet voice say:

Griselda M. McClure

"No blood nor bones in him shall be,
His shape it being such
That you may hear him speak, but not
His wandering shadow touch."

The plowman hurried home to tell his wife what the good enchanter had promised. His wife met him at the door, holding the half of a walnut shell in her hand. In the shell, upon a bit of whitest wool, lay the promised baby.

In half an hour he had his full growth, which was the exact size of the plowman's thumb. He was really a fairy child, and so the Queen of the Fairies named him, as the verse tells:

Tom Thumb, the which the Fairy Queen
Did give him for his name,
Who with her train of goblins grim
Unto the christening came.

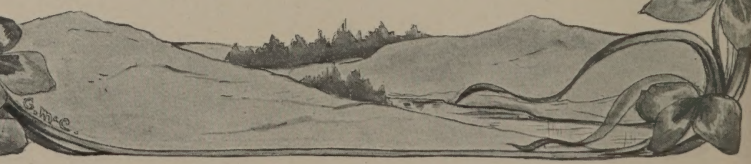
It was no small task to take care of a boy no bigger than a man's thumb. He ate so

little that a drop of milk had to be divided and put to his lips on a feather. Other children hunted the fields for such feathers as the wild birds shed, so that baby Tom had a fresh one every time he was given his milk.

To dress such a small boy was fun for his mother. When he was strong enough to play out of doors with the little boys who had the pleasure of his acquaintance, the story describes what he wore: a hat from a young oak leaf, downy and crimson as baby oak leaves are, shaded Tom like an umbrella. Helped by the fairies and the children, his mother gathered strands of spider web that held the rainbow colors which may be seen when the sun shines on them. From these she wove small hose and tiny doublets that were almost as light as soap bubbles, for Tom Thumb did not have strength to bear the weight of common clothes.

One playmate brought the thin rind of a beautiful green apple, from which stockings were made. Tom's father caught a little white-bellied field mouse and tanned its skin, from which shoes were made. When Tom was dressed in these pretty garments and started out to play, his stockings came down, for garters had been forgotten. Tom Thumb danced up and down with impatience to be off for the game of cherry stones, and his mother laughed at his plight. But she did not tease the child by laughing, although the tears ran down her cheeks. As she wiped her eyes an eyelash fell from her lid, and with it she tied up one stocking. Of course she plucked another lash, and in a gliff Tom was tidy for play.

I am sorry the story relates that Tom did not play fair in this game of cherry stones. He crawled into the other boys' pockets



and took out cherry stones which he pretended to win in the game. His mother wished him to be honest in soul, no matter how little he was in body, so she kept him in the house many days for punishment.

During one of these days the good mother was making a pudding, and Tom Thumb climbed up on the edge of the bowl to see the batter. Soon he lost his balance and fell into the pudding, where he would have been drowned but for Merlin's gift of safety from such harm. His mother was so used to his tricks of hiding that she did not notice his being in the pudding, along with the plums and other good things. So Tom paddled about in the batter, and even let his mother put him into the pudding bag, and drop him into the kettle to boil.

Now, although Tom could not have been hurt, even by boiling water, he had had fun

enough; so he made the pudding roll over and over, while he whistled and shouted until his mother thought the pudding was surely bewitched. She would not take the risk of a bewitched pudding on her table, and as the tinker was just then passing, she gave the dainty dish to him. Here Tom saw his chance to get out of doors to play, so he kept very quiet until the tinker was out in the yard. Then he began squeaking and squealing and bouncing the pudding about until the tinker was so scared that he threw it into the hedge and ran for home as if all the widgeons of Britain had turned to spooks and were at his heels.

When the tinker was out of sight Tom crept from the pudding bag and bathed himself in a pool of warm water. His bathtub was the hollow in a stone which held several spoonfuls of raindrops. Such a little warm

pool would have tempted any mite of a boy or sprite to wade and splash around.

When Tom had waded and splashed to his heart's content, he sat down upon a cushion of velvety cup moss, and remained until his clothes were dry. Then he coaxed a dragon fly to give him a ride up in the air. The dragon fly sailed around with Tom on his back until the boy wanted a drink, when he was let to crawl off and quench his thirst at a dewdrop which had hung on a blade of grass all day in a deep shade.

Tom had no mind to weary himself with walking from the hedge to his home, so he asked a black beetle to carry him on his horny back. By the kindness of the beetle Tom reached home at milking time. His mother was just going out to the cow yard; so to make sure she should not lose her boy again that day, she took him with her and

tied him to a thistle stalk. Tom did not mind being tethered to a thistle stalk. Indeed, he thought it quite rare sport for a time. His mother began the milking, and thinking her boy was safe, quite forgot him in watching the foam increase in the pail and listening to the singing, hissing streams as they made little whirlpools in white bubbles of rich milk.

The cow stood chewing her cud and gazing at the herd some distance away, now and then flapping an ear and saying, "Moo, moo," away down in her throat, so softly that the little voice was scarcely audible to Tom's mother. Lazily, too, the gentle creature lashed her tail from side to side, now and then giving it a seemingly angry sweep as some fly or gnat teased her. Once she flung the heavy, wet brush around in such a way as to strike her mistress a swashing blow full in the face, which would have greatly vexed the

woman had she not been more patient than most milkers, and felt so great an affection for the sleek animal. This cow had been one of her favorite pets before Tom came to be the greatest, albeit the most canty and winsome one that ever frolicked about a mother's feet.

"So-o-o, s-o-o, now, bossy!" cautioned Tom's mother. "Ye must e'en be more careful wi' that great flail o' a tail ye have." But just then something happened to frighten the cow, and she kicked out savagely at a little dog that came running and barking past her heels. Perhaps, too, Tom vexed her by some of his antics on the thistle, where he had been playing that he was a sailor sent aloft to do some feat of daring at the top of the tall mast of a great green ship.

The rapidly descending streams of milk, hurled into the ever-thickening foam by the

strong, skilled hands of Tom's mother, who took delight in seeing how far within the billowy mass she could make each stream pierce, had at last heaped it up far above the bucket brim.

Tom had noticed that, and was playfully naming it a snow mountain, when, as the cow kicked, the milk listed to one side and down went the foam, pouring, or rather tumbling, to the ground. Tom said to himself, "That was a big snowslide, was n't it?"

The kick that spilled the foam well-nigh unseated Tom's mother from her milking stool, a crude piece of gear with only one leg which had been stuck into an auger hole in the middle of the seat, or as near the middle as the plowman could fix it. This accident came near spilling all of the milk, and Mistress Cow would no doubt have got a good scolding this time, had not another happening

suddenly claimed all the attention of Tom's mother, Tom, and the cow. Tom had been climbing and leaping about the thistle stalk and its branches, now hanging to one of them by his toes and making faces at the cow, now skinning the cat, now creeping to the very end of the branch nearest his mother, to watch her and the foaming milk. He had at last gained the top of the stalk and stood on his head in the purple crown of a blossom, getting his face well powdered with pollen. Then he plucked some feathery parts of the flower and placed them in the brim of his jimp oak-leaf hat. Then, holding one of the smallest leaves in front of him for a shield and waving a big thistle thorn for a sword, he dared a clumsy, yellow, fuzzy, funny bumblebee to mortal combat. But the bumblebee was too busy stuffing pollen into his leg pockets to take much notice of his foeman.

Finally, trying to avoid a thrust from the sword, or perhaps startled by the barking of the little dog, he tumbled, broadside and buzzing, into the bright green grass.

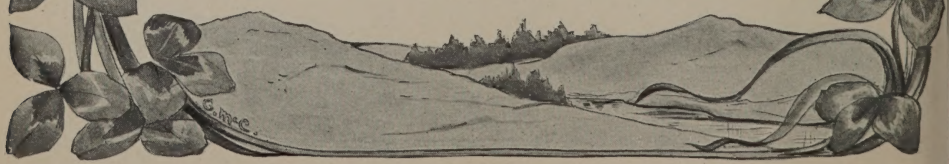
Tom leaned far over on his perch to taunt the bumblebee with being a coward, but the difficulty of his foothold and perhaps a naughty word in his throat caused him to halt and stammer. He had just hooted, "Cow, cow, cow!" when the sweet smell of the thistle and the mention of her name, it may be, caused the cow, with one sweep of her long rough tongue, to force thistle, Tom and all, into her soft, wet mouth. Then Tom bawled out: "Oh, cow! cow! cow! Oh, mother! mother! mother!" Lucky and thrice lucky was it for him that just then the cow swallowed her cud without waiting to chew the thistle, else right here our story might have ended.

The cow lapped a little at the grass and

lay down to chew her cud. Tom's mother well knew what would happen. Tom and the grass and the thistle would all come up together for a fresh chewing. So she took her milking stool and sat down close to the cow's head and waited. She saw when the bunch of feed came slowly up under the soft, hairy skin of the creature's throat, and when it was in the cow's mouth she put in her hand and snatched the little fellow out. Of course he had lost his hat and sword and oak-leaf shield, but, boylike, he squirmed and shouted, "Where 's that bumblebee?"

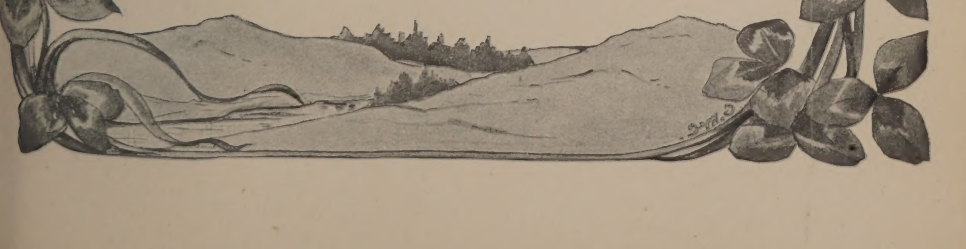
His mother carried him home in her apron, and told his father why she had been so long milking. Tom sat on his father's hand and told how he had scared a bumblebee.

One time Tom went to the field to see his father plow. He soon grew tired of riding on



the plowman's shoulder, and begged to drive the oxen instead. So he was given a barley straw for a whip and set safely between the horns of the greatest ox. If the oxen could have heard Tom's little voice as he shouted "Gee! gee-ho!" or if they could have felt the lashing of his barley-straw whip, they would have been goaded to madness; but they plodded slowly along to the end of a furrow, knowing nothing about their small driver. When they stopped to rest, the ox Tom was riding bent his head to crop some grass, and Tom slid down a smooth horn to the ground.

After his long ride Tom felt the need of using his legs, and, like any other boy, he capered about on the sweet-smelling ground, turning somersaults, walking on his hands, and standing on his head. A hungry raven, flying half a mile high, saw the tiny moving



thing and smelled the mouse-skin shoes. Thinking, "There 's a young mole for my dinner," down he swooped, picked Tom up by the heel, and away he flew. Tom happened to have his barley-straw whip, with which he tickled the raven's ear until the bird dropped him. The raven chanced to be flying over a giant's castle when he dropped Tom, who fell into the open mouth of the sleeping giant.

Now Tom rather liked adventures, but he did not wish to explore a giant's stomach, so he lodged in his throat, tickling his palate and scratching his tongue until the giant fell into such a fit of coughing and sneezing that Tom was thrown into the sea, which came close to the castle wall.

Tom could swim, and was glad of a salt-water bath at this moment. Having dived and soused until tired, he turned on his back and floated. A fish took him for a dainty

morsel and swallowed him, oak-leaf hat, spider-web shirt, garters, shoes and all.

"This is a pretty kettle of fish," laughed Tom; but he had no time to plan an escape before the fish was caught, and Tom was released by the cook, who was preparing the king's dinner.

"Let me garnish the platter!" cried Tom. So, balancing himself on the dish, he was placed before the king.

"What have we here?" gayly asked King Arthur as Tom removed his hat, knelt before his king, and threw a kiss to the lovely queen. Tom answered with the reverence due his king, "Your Majesty, I am the smallest but most loyal subject in the realm."

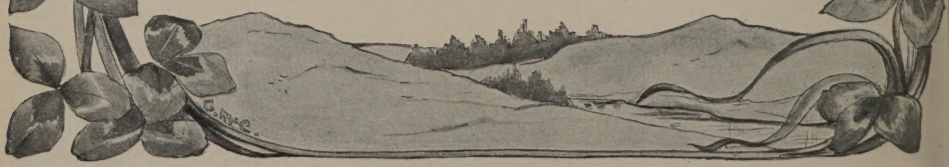
The fish stood untasted while the company was amused by the sprightly wit of this welcome but unexpected guest. The ancient verses tell that:

Among the deeds of courtship done,
His highness did command
That he should dance a galliard brave
Upon the queen's right hand.

All which he did, and for the same
Our king his signet gave,
Which Tom about his middle wore
Long time, a girdle brave.

Behold it was a rich reward,
And given by the king,
Which to his praise and worthiness
Did lasting honor bring.

Would Tom forget his father and mother, the cow and the oxen, in the pleasures of the court? We shall see. He became a favorite of the king and no knightly joust was complete unless Tom was there to dance and play. He was the special pet of the queen, and would leap from one of her hands to the other, never forgetting the courtesy of an uncovered head



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in her presence. The king so loved the little fellow that he wanted him on his saddlebow whenever he rode. The story tells in quaint old verse about one of these rides:

> But on a time, whenas it rained,
> Tom Thumb most nimbly crept
> Into his buttonhole, where he
> All in his bosom slept.
> And being near his Highness' heart,
> Did crave a wealthy boon,
> A noble gift, the which the king
> Commanded should be done.

Now if Tom had asked for a little crown just like the king's or a string of pearls exactly like the queen's, except in size, his wish would have been granted. But while Tom had slept in the king's bosom he had dreamed of his father's sheltering hand.

He had always thought of his mother's tender looks when the queen was smiling

upon him, so he made bold to tell the king about his aged parents and the sorrow he knew they were in because of his absence. The boon he craved was permission to return to his humble home, with as much silver as he could carry.

So then away went lusty Tom
With threepence at his back,
A heavy burden which did make
His very bones to crack.

The homesick boy traveled two days and nights, arriving at his own door so tired that he could make himself heard only by dropping his load upon the doorstone with a great jingle. There was joy in Tom's home that night. His mother held him in her apron while his father bound his little, blistered feet in mutton tallow. He was wrapped in lamb's wool, tucked into a tiny oak knot which his father had hollowed for a cradle, and placed

on the stone hearth in the middle of the room, where he slept like a top. His parents would not lose sight of him, so they threw some sheepskins on the earthen floor, and the father snored on one side of the boy, while the mother dozed on the other side.

They feasted Tom on hazelnuts for three days, and little was done but listen to stories of the doings at King Arthur's court. Tom told of a great tournament which was to be held that very week, and his mother could see that he longed to go.

The distance, however, was too great to be walked, and there was no way of riding. Tom's father was quite willing his lad should return to the merry life and to the king's household for a visit. A way for Tom to take the journey was found. He was put into the dinner horn, and one strong puff of his father's breath sent him flying through the

air, landing him on one of the furry skins spread out before the king's tent.

Tom was hailed with much noise of trumpets and waving of banners, for he had been sadly missed. When the knights were doing clever feats with their swords, Tom won the first prize of the day by cutting a golden hair from the queen's head with his little sword, which was no bigger than a fine needle. Of course it had to be done with one stroke and without touching the queen's temple or even causing her to wince. He also rode his tiny horse through the queen's bracelet without brushing the gold with his plume, nor was it touched by his horse's hoof.

Not long after this great tournament little Tom fell very ill, and although King Arthur's own physician cared for him and the queen herself nursed him, he grew worse daily, and soon got so thin that the doctors had to look

at him through a magnifying glass. His legs dwindled till they seemed only strands of spider web, and his head shriveled until his face was no bigger than an ant's.

As Merlin, the kind enchanter, knew what was happening to his Thumbling, he sent the Fairy Queen to wait for Tom's soul.

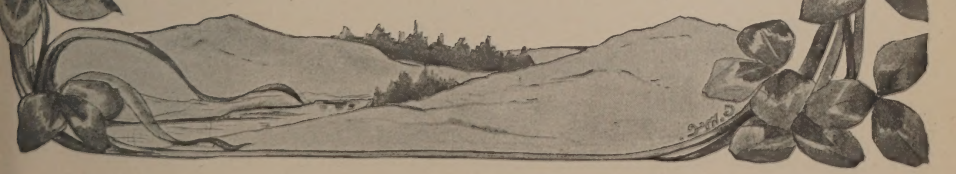
> And with her flying nymphs in green
> She took him from his bed
> With music sweet and melody
> As soon as life was fled.

King Arthur's court mourned for Tom forty days. The king built a tomb of gray marble for him, and once every year the knights came to honor his memory. His parents mourned for Tom all the rest of their lives. They built no tomb; they made no pilgrimage; but every night when they were seated by the fire in the middle of the room, they talked together of the fairy child Merlin

had given them. Together they laughed over his merry pranks and pretty ways, until at last he seemed to live with them again.

To mourn for this merry child by weeping and wearing black clothes seemed wrong to his simple, loving parents. So when his birthdays were kept they wore their best clothes, and the house was decked with clover blossoms until the kitchen smelled as sweet as a field. A bowl of red clover was put on the table for the plowman and a bowl of white clover was put beside it for the plowman's wife. The dresser was adorned with yellow king's clover mixed with Dutch clover and bird's-foot clover, flowers which Tom had dearly loved.

On one of these days of mourning the queen sent the old people a little ivory picture of Tom just as he looked when dancing on her hand.



PART II

TOM COMES BACK TO EARTH

The Fairy Queen so dearly loved little Tom that she made him her scepter bearer. Of course Tom became well and merry-hearted as soon as he began life in Fairy-land, but we have no account of his doings there. We are told that he was so loved in that world that he was given leave to come back to earth, which he gladly did.

Arthur was no longer king, and all the knights who had known Tom were in their tombs. The midget met with a sad mishap at the very beginning of this visit to earth. We are told that he fell into a bowl of "frumenty," and the splash he made filled the cook's eyes with the hot stuff. The cook dropped the bowl, which broke on the floor,

and the king, with all his company, sat waiting and hungry.

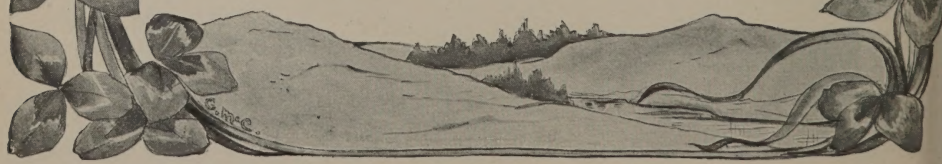
Now the cook was a surly fellow, who was always looking for evil sprites, and when he saw Tom sitting on a piece of the broken bowl, making believe that he was rowing a boat on a sea of frumenty, his anger was terrible. Tom was picked up in a wooden spoon and cast before the king as the wicked elf who had spoiled a good dinner. Then every one shouted that such a creature should be put to death. It so happened that the miller shouted loudest of all, opening his mouth so wide that Tom easily leaped down his throat.

Once out of reach of the hands that would have crushed him, Tom's spirit of fun rose. He whistled and sang in the miller's stomach, scaring twenty learned doctors who were called to cure the sickness which the miller felt on account of such a lively lump that

could not be digested. The miller was bled until he was weak and faint. Finally the doctors accused him of having done some wicked deed for which he was being punished, and the poor scared man at last confessed that he had sometimes taken unfair toll.

Having confessed this, the miller jumped from his bed and ran to his mill to restore some grain to the owner's sack. As he came to the stream which turned his mill wheels, Tom climbed the scared man's windpipe as a sailor climbs a mast, and leaped out into the river. A salmon found Tom up near the North Pole, and swallowed him for a dainty morsel. The salmon was soon after caught by a fisherman and put in the market for sale.

The steward of the king in this North Country came to buy the king's dinner, and seeing the beautiful fish, asked its price.



"It's too dear," said the steward; and thereupon Tom shouted, "Sir, give the other penny."

The market man and the steward stood as if turned to stone. Tom waited to hear some bargain made between them, and at last called out from the fish's belly:

> "The like in all the land
> Before was never seen;
> Present this salmon out of hand
> Unto our king and queen."

The salmon was given to the cook with orders to serve it for the king and queen, for it was thought to be an enchanted fish. This cook was of a good temper, and Tom presented himself with more propriety than in the other king's kitchen. He was made welcome at court, and the king sent for his own tailor, to make him such fine clothes as a favorite knight should wear.

His shirt was cut out of the wings
Of a fair butterfly;
His breeches, coat, and other things,
All pleasing to the eye.

Upon his legs he likewise had
Boots made of chicken leather;
Like any jolly, noble lad
He wore his hat and feather.

A tailor's needle was his sword,
His headpiece was a thimble;
And when he fought, upon my word
He made the giants tremble.

The king, with a party of noblemen, went to the forest one day, to hunt. Tom rode a white mouse instead of a horse, and in the excitement of chasing a wild boar, the king and his party lost sight of him for a moment. A cat caught his mouse-steed. Tom fought valiantly, running the cat's ear quite through with his sword, but his coat was tattered like

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a rag, and his feather was smeared with blood. The hunters found him still in his saddle, defending his charger and himself with dauntless courage. Even the bravest of Arthur's knights felt some fear of attacking an angry cat, but their devotion to the pet of the court led them to face the danger, and Tom was released from the snarling, spitting animal and taken home.

The chief physician, after calling a council of many doctors, told the king that the little court favorite was mortally wounded.

Both far and near the tidings flew
Of Tom's unhappy fate,
And learned doctors came to view
His present dying state.

Not one of them could do him good
Or keep him safe from death,
For by their skill they understood
He 'd die for want of breath.

A tiny box of ivory was soon lined with the softest of snowy down for his poor wounded body to rest upon. All the nobles and even the king wept to see how quietly he bore his sufferings, but Tom never made a moan or breathed a sigh, because he knew very well that this bloody path into which he had been thrust so suddenly would lead him safely back to Fairyland, where there would be no more pain for him. His only cause for sorrow was that the king and queen and all his brother knights had to be left on the earth for a time.

When at last he left this world, thousands of fairy spirits stood about his couch, each one wearing a mourning garland of cypress, for they also grieved to see him so wounded. Some of them, with a hundred little maidens dressed all in white, wearing veils of filmy lace, went before him, leading the way through

a path of light into the very heart of the fairy country.

When Tom ceased to breathe, the quaint old verses tell this:

They put him in a winding sheet
More white than lilies fair;
These fairies all with music sweet
Did mount the lofty air.

And soon they vanished out of sight
Up to the Fairy Queen, —
And from this time the worthy knight
Was never after seen.

PART III

TOM THUMB AND KING THUNSTON

Tom had been such a genial little earth man that the world would not give him up to Fairyland, and when he came again he could not have disguised himself so that people would not have known him. As soon, therefore, as Tom stepped before the king a great shout of joy went up from the nobles. Even the steward, the cook, and the scullery boys threw their hats in the air and danced for joy.

King Thunston ordered a feast which should last a whole month, and there were games and pageants in which Tom was the center of all interest.

A little palace of gold and ivory was built for him by order of the king. Cunning workmen carved the ivory doors, which turned on

hinges of gold. Every morning fresh curtains, woven of spider webs, were hung about his bed. A little mother-of-pearl shell was fixed to the floor for his bath. Sweet wild flowers gave up their perfumes for his pleasure, and rose petals shaded the tiny windows of his castle.

In truth, Tom would have been spoiled by all this needless show had not his father and mother been such sturdy folk that his early training was not lost in Thunston's court.

It took much skill to fashion a coach suited to Tom's needs; but one was made from tortoise shell, exquisitely carved to look like a Roman chariot.

Six white mice with long tails and pink ears drew his coach. Once when Tom was driving a dreadful thunderstorm arose. Tom left his fragile coach open and crept into a huge, empty snail shell, where he stayed until

Griselda M. McElroy

the storm was past. His mice ran home in great fright, breaking the chariot into many pieces, and Tom rode home on a bat which pitied him.

After this mishap Tom fell ill and had a great longing to leave his ivory castle, to find the hearth and shelter of his first house. He set out at midnight, riding a night moth which was guided by the scent of the old garden — or perhaps by the odor of his mate.

It was well for Tom that he fell into a deep sleep by the way, for his heart would have been broken by the sight of the ruin into which the home of his childhood had fallen. The moths could not waken him when they got there, so they found a caterpillar and asked it to weave a silk cocoon, within which they gently laid him to rest, where the fairies found him. All the creatures that had known Tom Thumb crowded around the

fairies, begging them not to take him from this world. There came the little white-bellied field mouse and the dragon fly; the black beetle and the moo-cow; the fuzzy bumble-bee and the horned oxen; the raven and the fish; Tom's little horse and the salmon; every one imploring the fairies to leave their little pet where they might see and play with him, but the fairies could not disobey their queen, so they bore away the tiny body.

The old rhyme says that:

Although he 's dead, his memory lives
Recorded ever sure;
His very name some pleasure gives,
And ever will endure.

GLOSSARY

bewitched: subjected to witchcraft or sorcery
billet: a log
canty: sprightly, merry
dolt: a dunce, a stupid fellow
dragon: a fabulous winged serpent
flail: a wooden staff at the end of which a stouter and shorter pole is hung so as to swing freely; used in threshing grain
frumenty: food made of hulled wheat, milk, sugar, and fruit
galliard: a gay dance
gear: whatever is prepared for use or wear
gliff: a transient glance
glint: gleam
glistering: glittering, gleaming
goblin: a frightful or evil spirit
griffin: a fabulous monster, half lion and half eagle
hind: the female of the red deer
jimp: neat; handsome
larder: a room where uncooked food is kept
listed: leaned or inclined
loon: a sorry fellow; a stupid man
maw: a stomach, now used only of the lower animals except in humor or contempt
moat: a ditch

nymph : a fabulous woman of mountains, forests, meadows, or waters

ooze : soft mud or slime

pluck : courage

saddlebow : the front part of a saddle

scepter : a staff borne by a king or queen

signet : in England the seal used by the sovereign in signing private letters

spooks : hobgoblins

sprite : an elf

taut : tight, secure

tethered : confined with a long rope or chain

thatching : covering so as to keep out rain or snow

tinker : one who mends pans

toll : a part of the grain taken by a miller in payment for grinding

tournament : a mock fight

trencher : a large wooden plate or platter

tunic : a loose-fitting garment confined at the waist by a belt or girdle

tussock : a dense tuft or bunch

wand : a small stick or rod

widgeons : small cranes or ducks

wind door : an opening under the eaves for the escape of smoke

winsome : light-hearted

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